

**Testimony of Nia Harris  
1<sup>st</sup> Year Medical Student, UConn School of Medicine**

**Appropriations Committee – February 15, 2017**

**Re: UConn Health Budget**

Good Evening,

Co-Chairs, Ranking Member, and members of the Committee, I am Nia Harris a 1st year Medical Student at UConn. I am a resident of Farmington.

Thank you for all of your incredible support for the University of Connecticut Health Center. Because of your investments in UConn Health, it is a great university that is making a real difference to our State and to UConn students. Did you know that approximately 80% of our students are Connecticut residents when they enroll at UConn Medical?

I understand that it is a very difficult time for the State budget, and that you have a very difficult task in front of you to balance the budget. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you and urge you to minimize any cuts to UConn Health.

The recommended budget released last week cuts UConn Health's budget. Significant cuts to the institution would reverse the progress made at UConn Health and I fear they will negatively impact my education. Moreover, these cuts may increase cost of attendance at this institution, which will make it less affordable for people who come from various less advantaged backgrounds to enroll at UConn Health.

I have been involved in the UConn Health Career Opportunities Program (HCOP) since I was in high school. As an undergraduate, I spent every summer at UConn Health – doing clinical research, basic science research, and taking a MCAT preparatory course, all of which were UConn Health HCOP summer programs. Finally, once I graduated, I could think of no place better to spend my gap year than working in a laboratory at UConn Health, a place that had become much like a second home to me. This feeling of “home” is one of the reasons that I decided to enroll at UConn School of Medicine. The professors, my fellow classmates, and the opportunities that are afforded to me as a student at this institution have solidified for me that I made the right decision.

I remember it like it was yesterday, I was on my way to the gym when I received my acceptance to UConn School of Medicine in my inbox. I was beyond excited and called my mom to tell her the good news. The next day, I received a call from a number that I did not recognize. Lo and behold it was Dr. Marja Hurley. She wanted to call and personally congratulate me on getting into UConn School of Medicine and she offered me the HCOP full scholarship. That call changed my life. Had it not been for this scholarship, I am not sure how I would have paid for medical school. I am extremely grateful and feel blessed to have received a full scholarship. This scholarship, and the HCOP office in general, help increase the diversity of UConn's Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine. I find this extremely important and fear that funding cuts will negatively affect UConn Health's diverse student population.

I am very concerned that these cuts will jeopardize UConn's ability to help align the diversity of physicians with the populations that they serve. Moreover, for me personally, my ability to pay for

school (as well as that of others who received the HCOP scholarship) may be jeopardized by the budget cuts, which frankly is terrifying. The HCOP scholarship as well as many UConn Programs (the simulation center, the Clinical Skills Assessment Program, etc.) are critical to making sure that UConn Health can continue to play the important role that it does in training the next generation of Connecticut physicians, and contributing to a strong Connecticut in the future.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening and for your ongoing support of UConn Health. I urge you to find a way to minimize any cuts so that UConn Health can continue to provide the important benefits to our students and patients and to Connecticut's economy. The time I have spent at UConn Health have changed me for the better and I hope that others in coming years will have similar opportunities for growth.